

Prejudice and the People of God (How Revelation and Redemption Lead to Reconciliation) by A. Charles Ware, Kregel Publishers, Grand Rapids: 2001(49 Quotes selected by Doug Nichols)

1. Universal church standards allow for a multicultural church.

Cornelius's conversion introduced a new vision for world discipleship into the church. In not many years, Gentile converts became more than a small minority in the New Testament church. The issue of universal church standards became a major concern. Christians of Jewish background may have accepted the salvation granted to the Gentiles (v. 18), but many of them still believed that Jewish standards were the norm to which Gentiles had to conform. The issue of church standards was the focal point of a major church conflict in the late 40's, less than twenty years after the birth of the church (15:1-2, 5-7). This conflict required strong leadership to resolve.

That resolution confessed the existence of universal standards, but these standards allow a multicultural church. First, the leaders conceded that conformity to circumcision and other ceremonial laws was not necessary for salvation (vv. 1-19). Second, they established minimal standards for all believers (vv. 20, 28-29). Third, the standards were not compromises from true biblical principle but rather were communicated in a way that was sensitive to both Jewish and Gentile cultures (vv. 20-21). Fourth, the Jewish Christian leaders assumed the responsibility of communicating their conclusion to the Gentiles (vv. 22-29). This was important for healing because the Gentiles had come to identify Jews with unreasonable standards (vv. 1-2, 5, 24). It also made a public statement to the Jewish communities, both Christian and non-Christian, that the Gentiles were fully part of the family of God. (p. 24,25)

2. Unity with diversity.

First Corinthians has much to say about unity with diversity. Chapter 3 calls for unity between factions within the church. In 1 Corinthians 11-14, Paul calls for a team perspective regarding the use of differing gifts. Even in this seemingly unrelated discussion are some sound principles concerning unity with diversity versus uniformity. First Corinthians 8-10 deals specifically with cultural differences in the church.

Colossians 1-3 addresses cultural differences, too. In 1 Timothy 1 and 4, Paul addresses issues with which the multiracial church at Ephesus was wrestling. Paul instructs Timothy about how the saints should behave themselves in the church, the house of God (1 Tim. 3:15-16). Titus 1:10-16; 3:8-9; 1 Peter 2:1-12; and Revelation 5:9; 7:9 all testify to the church's reflection of all of the peoples who are born into the family of God.

Oneness in the body of Christ is not a minor or peripheral New Testament theme. Christ both modeled and taught the concept of a multiracial, rather than a homogeneous, church. In harmony with His model and in obedience to His command, His disciples built a racially diverse church. The New Testament records how the apostles struggled to maintain true doctrinal unity with cultural diversity. (p. 26)

3. Trust requires the application of knowledge.

Knowledge of facts about another person does not mean that a bond is about to occur. Movement from casual, superficial acquaintance to intimate trust requires the application of knowledge. Consistent application demands temperance. Once certain principles and practices become clear, we need the self-discipline to obey those things that will help to build our relationship (Ps. 1; James 2:19-25). Temperance often means stopping actions that we do naturally and creating new habits that minister grace to others. A few examples may include use of ethnic jokes, offensive symbols, demeaning language, patronizing actions, and a token time commitment. Deep bonding requires time and investment. Having many shallow friendships is a testimony to one's lack of temperance. (p. 33-34)

4. Healthy integration will not be achieved overnight.

We must understand that good, healthy, loving interracial/intercultural relationships will not flourish overnight. A white brother commented to me that he was tired of talking about race. My response was, "I'm tired of living with racism." The great divide did not occur overnight. Healthy integration will not be achieved overnight, either. We must continue patiently doing that which we know to be right (James 1:2-12; 5:7-12). Strong relationships require long-term nurturing. We will reap in time if we do not faint. (p. 34)

5. Confronting the sin of racism.

However hard the task, the decision as to whether we should strive for unity under the headship of Christ has never been ours to make. It is not up for referendum. We desperately need to recognize that the church is God's possession, purchased with the blood of Christ. Christians, therefore, must search the Scripture together to find God's solution to the "race issue."

God's prerogative is to define what our relationships should be (Acts 20:28; Eph. 1:21-23). God has revealed clearly and propositionally His will for His people in Scripture (2 Tim. 3:14-16). True Christians should have three primary concerns. The first concern is to determine what Scripture teaches through literal, grammatical, and historical interpretation of relevant biblical texts (2 Tim. 2:15). Second, after the primary interpretation, one must apply that interpretation to one's own historical cultural

setting. Third, all Scripture properly understood and applied demands a response from the believer (James 1:21-25). (p.35)

6. Racism is passed on from generation to generation.

Racism is an assumption that genetics and ancestry predetermine an individual's abilities, character, and value and that one's own racial genetic family is biologically superior to all other races. This assumption is based primarily on a materialistic worldview. It is institutionalized into a cultural, social, and political system and passed on from generation to generation. (p. 35)

7. Examine the issues related to biblical reconciliation.

Many discussions of the race problem in America generate more heat than light. What we need is to hear from God and to be responsive to His position on the matter. As we examine the issues related to biblical reconciliation, we must follow specific biblical principles to avoid the abuse of Scripture found in some interpreters on both sides. Some of these principles are so generic that stating them seems to be needless. But we must think of those foundational principles specifically in the context of racial reconciliation, even as we are called to invite the lost to reconciliation with God.

- The Bible speaks to every issue of life and to every relationship (2 Tim. 3:16-17).
- Biblical truths have preeminence over culture or heritage (John 4:23-24).
- Every human being has common ancestry in Adam and Noah (Gen. 1:26-27; 8, 9; Acts 17:26-29).
- All human beings are sinners in need of a Savior (Rom. 3:9-23).
- Jesus Christ is the only Savior (Rom. 3:24-30).
- Those justified through the blood of Christ are part of on family of God (John 3:16; 1 Cor. 12:13-14; Eph. 2:13-22; Rev. 7:9).
- Therefore, the Bible exhorts us to accept diversity within the bonds of unity (Eph. 4:1-6).
- The earliest Christians struggled with diversity, but they modeled a unity based upon love for Christ and one another (Acts 6:1-7; 10; 11; 15; Gal. 2:1-16).
- Love for the brethren is a mark of authentic faith (1 John 3:14-18; 4:7-11).
- Mutual love and acceptance testify to the world of the meaning of Christian discipleship (John 13:34-35).
- Love is nurtured when Christian fellowship is characterized by humility (Phil. 2:1-8).
- Christian love listens and forgives while correcting past errors.
- Christian love upholds brothers and sisters in prayer.
- Christian love perseveres and expects the best in others, provoking them to love and good works.

- Christian love shares all good things in thanksgiving.
- Christians must recognize that the church is God's possession, purchased with the blood of Christ.

By keeping these principles in our hearts, we are ready to follow God's counsel regarding the makeup of the church and the dynamics of church life. (p. 39-40)

8. Apply the practice of reconciliation.

Jesus replaced pragmatism with overriding principles of love for neighbor, the call to discipleship and concern for other. Churches that biblically practice reconciliation in Christ are not stagnant numerically or spiritually. (p. 44)

9. New World colonists flee oppressive governmental system yet implement a system more oppressive.

It was incumbent on New World colonists to explain how they could flee an oppressive governmental system and yet implement a system ten times more oppressive in the New World. (p. 46)

10. History of slave trade in the United States from 1619 to 1840.

The trip from the Gulf of Guinea to the New World was called the Middle Passage. A conservative estimate is that of the 14.6 million Africans who were transported, 12 million of them landed in Latin America and about 2 million of them were brought to the United States. The others died en route. Still others died resisting capture or in captivity in Africa while waiting to be shipped. Many of them committed suicide. Some of them, beaten and too weak to continue the trek in the coffle (similar to a chain gang), were abandoned to die.

About twenty "indentured servants" were the first black slaves to arrive in North America, sold off a Dutch frigate at Jamestown, Virginia, on August 20, 1619. There was little comparison of African slaves with European immigrants. The majority of African-Americans did not come to the United States seeking the American dream; rather, they experienced a nightmare of forced subjugation and service for the benefit of others. For the slaves, all memories of Africa were extinguished. Family ties were destroyed. Members of the same tribe were separated as a safeguard against revolt. Families were split up for economic reason.

The Portuguese and the Spanish seem to have been the first modern Europeans to deal in the black slave trade. With the approval of the necessary governments in Africa, Europe, North America, and the Caribbean, as well as with the tacit support of the Roman Catholic Church, slave traders maintained the "christianized" slaves were better off than the free heathen.

Not all blacks who reached the shores of the Americas were slaves. Thirty black crewmen accompanied Balboa when he discovered the Pacific Ocean in 1513. Estevanico accompanied Cabeza de Vaca from Florida into Mexico between 1528 and 1534.

The English, Dutch, and French later entered the slave-trading picture, establishing stations in West Africa. By 1786, American and English ships carried the bulk of the trade. Africans, as well as whites, were involved in capturing and selling nearly twenty million Africans over the span of some three hundred years (1517-1840). (p. 46-47)

11. When the choice was between human rights and money, money won out.

For all of its evils, slavery was a very lucrative segment of the Southern economy, especially after invention of the cotton gin made cotton a valuable cash crop if there was cheap labor to tend and harvest it. If abolitionists did not anticipate backlash, they should have. When the choice was between human rights and money, money won out. The economic component was so overriding that – although Congress had passed a law in 1807 forbidding the African slave trade – smuggling continued, and laws against interstate kidnapping were violated. (p. 50)

12. Restrictions arrested educational advancement of slaves and compounded ignorance.

The revolts were attributed to Negro preachers' being brainwashed by white abolitionists. Consequently, heavy restrictions on teaching blacks to read, write, or worship freely were imposed. In 1823, Mississippi made it unlawful for six or more Negroes to meet for educational purposes. Religious meetings required the master's permission and white supervision. In Delaware in 1831, no more than twelve blacks were allowed to assemble later than midnight unless there were three respectable whites present. Because the church was instrumental in the education of slaves, these restrictions arrested educational advancement and compounded ignorance. By 1845, only fifteen Negro Sabbath schools existed in the South, with 1,489 pupils attending. (p. 50)

13. Jesus himself equates love of neighbor with love of God.

Jesus Himself equates love of neighbor with love of God. Well might the slave masters, "desiring to justify [themselves]," have asked, "Who is my neighbor?" What more appropriate response than the parable that Jesus told about the Good Samaritan, who, at some inconvenience to himself, aided a mugging victim? Jesus' selection of main characters was deliberate. The crime victim was of a race/culture who considered themselves superior to the race/culture of the man who provided the much needed

assistance. However, the mugged man was totally dependent on the despised Samaritan neighbor for life and care. (p 51)

14. Preachers sometimes preached pro-submission sermons.

Preachers sometimes preached pro-submission sermons to their master and slave parishioners from the book of Philemon, although one wonders about their use of the book to justify slavery. Addressed to the Christian master Philemon, the letter makes clear that Paul is not in favor of slavery: “I could be bold and order you to do what you ought to do, yet I appeal to you on the basis of love” (Philem. 15-16). (p. 51)

15. European and American systems of slavery could not be defended on the basis of Old Testament law.

Nor could the European and American systems of slavery be defended on the basis of Old Testament law, for that slavery was intended to be of mostly limited duration for economic reasons, and it had escape clauses. A slave could purchase his or her freedom, as could their kinsman-redeemer. On every fiftieth-year jubilee, slaves were freed unless they chose to remain in bondage. Slaves were never to be mistreated, and women had special protections if their masters wanted to have sexual relationships with them. (p. 51)

16. Great men are created in times of great need.

It is true in the annals of history that great men are created in times of great need. The slave question precipitated the rise of a number of giants on the world stage. We have but to recall abolitionists such as Benjamin Lundy, William Lloyd Garrison, Rev. Robert B. Hall, Theodore Weld, Levi Coffin, Charles G. Finney, William Phillips, John Mason Peck, and Henry Ward Beecher, to name just a few. No way exists to assess and honor adequately the untold number of whites, Native Americans, and blacks who maintained the metaphorical machinery known as the Underground Railroad. Harriet Tubman receives a fair amount of publicity. But the success of the Railroad was a direct result of the indispensable secrecy that surrounded it, leaving us with a dearth of information on this monumental effort. (p.52)

17. Books as important conveyers of values.

I will always value books as important conveyers of values. Some spokesmen are grateful that Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (1852) was a major force in enlightening them to the atrocities of slavery. To overstate the impact of this book at this particular point in the political history of the United States is difficult. Its impact was multiplied by the increasing polarization between pro- and antislavery forces. After the publication of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, people could no longer simply ignore such unjust legal decisions as the U.S. Supreme Court’s Dred Scott decision in 1857. It helped stir

the public passions to understand and even justify John Brown's attempt to start a national rebellion of slaves in 1859. All of these forces helped drive the country toward civil war and the election of Abraham Lincoln in 1860. (p. 52)

18. The Ku Klux Klan (KKK) a defense league and a terrorist organization dedicated to defending the white race.

The Ku Klux Klan (KKK) was formed a few years after the Civil War. Ostensibly a secret fraternal organization, its true purpose was to be a defense league and a terrorist organization dedicated to defending the white race. The Klan became a political and social force in the South and some areas of the North, enforcing a system of laws and Southern practices designed to segregate, suppress, and even reenslave blacks. The system was popularly called "Jim Crow". Regardless of whether it was written into law, the Klan mentality permitted whites to target blacks with terrorism and almost unspeakable brutality. Few whites in the North or the South raised their voices in protest.

The KKK made their objective the abuse of black civil rights leaders, Jewish leaders, individuals who spoke up for civil rights, and often randomly chosen, relatively helpless individuals. The KKK is fairly well known for its white costume, including the mask and the pointed hood. Their trademark warning was the burning cross near the houses of those whom they wanted to intimidate. They lynched, burned victims alive, and bombed, maintaining the approval—or at least the silence—of their neighbors through fear of the raping, pillaging black man and the cheating Jew. The intent was to keep black and Jews fearful and powerless, creating an atmosphere of terror that made the price of dissent too high for most people to risk.

Laws enforced strict racial segregation to keep blacks "in their place," a popular Jim Crow expression. Impossibly high voting qualifications and literacy tests were set up to keep black from voting. The "grandfather" test limited voter registration to applicants whose grandfathers had voted. This eliminated the descendants of former slaves. These tactics took their toll. Whereas in 1896, 130,334 blacks had voted, in 1904, only 1,342 black were registered voters. (p. 53,54)

19. The assault against the black race came from all levels but a period of tremendous church growth in the black community.

The assault against the black race came from all levels. In 1896, the U.S. Supreme Court added blows with the infamous separate-but-equal facilities ruling. Blacks who traveled through the South found it necessary to go self-sustained because of the unavailability of accommodations for their families. This situation gave rise to the very common picnic basket of fried chicken and related trimmings as well as the portable potty for the little ones whose bladders were not able to hold on for the long stretches between safe, friendly facilities.

In spite of all of this opposition, this period witnessed tremendous church growth in the black community. One reason was the fact that the church spoke effectively to the frustrations, the family lives strained by violence, the bigoted job practices, and the enforced poverty. Black families were penalized by a distorted male role model engraved in the view of reality by two centuries of slavery. Descendants of slaves still find it difficult to shake this negative self-concept of the role of the male in the family. (p. 55)

20. Afro-centrism replaced that distorted Eurocentric Christianity with and equally distorted Afrocentric view. (p. 57)

21. Modernity is running rampant in all sectors of the church.

As modernity is running rampant in all sectors of the church, we see various self-styled religious leaders trading on the black community's tendency to seek a god to "take their troubles to". Yet, even while Satan is having a field day, he is not welcome in Bible-believing churches. The banner of the Lord is still raised in many black congregations. In these churches, people of good will of all races are welcome. There is ever an olive branch extended to those who seek to find the will of God for their lives. (p. 58)

22. Race designation derives from a white obsession with a pure gene pool.

The entire race designation or choice is built upon lies. One wonders why a person whose ancestry includes European and African blood is designated black or African-American. According to the 1990 census, the majority of black Americans are of mixed ancestry. Obviously, neither the designation nor the choice to identify oneself as African-American is based upon fact. This classification system derives from a white obsession with a pure gene pool. (p. 61)

23. A myth of racial unity exists.

A myth of racial unity exists. When criticizing each other, we like to talk in terms of what all blacks or all whites believe or do. Such language perpetuates a myth. The word *all* should to be reserved for very rare occasions. We know, however, that *all* have sinned (Rom. 3:23).

Often, when I am speaking in a church whose membership is predominantly white, I have been asked, "Does Jesse Jackson speak for all blacks?"

During the administration of William Clinton, I answered with a question: "Does Bill Clinton speak for all whites?" In the laughter that followed my response, everyone seemed to get the point. Vastly differing beliefs, values, and leaders exist within racial groups. (p. 63)

24. The media have perpetuated the myth that blacks are more prone to commit crimes.

The media have perpetuated the myth that blacks are more prone to commit crimes. While crime related to poverty and gangs is a grave concern in urban black communities, it was not black people whose fraud destroyed the savings and loan financial industry in the 1980s. For every Ugandan Idi Amin there has been a Cambodian Khmer Rouge, a Slavic Stalin, an Arab Khomeini, and a German Hitler. Human cannibal Jeffery Dahmer, madman Charles Manson, and Dr. Death (Jack Kevorkian) are but a few examples of fair-skinned menaces to society. Yet, some whites (as well as some blacks) have an immediate sense of danger in the presence of blacks, especially males, whereas they feel secure in the presence of whites. Judging whether an individual is dangerous should be based upon more data than the color of one's skin. (p. 64)

25. Let us reject the myths and receive the truth from the Holy Scriptures.

Racism is a reality, but so is mythological thinking. Christians need to be committed to speaking the truth in love with a view toward growing in our knowledge of Christ and working together for mutual benefit (Eph. 4:15-16). Let us reject the myths and receive the truth. Truth is to be discovered from a literal, grammatical, historical interpretation of the Holy Scriptures. (p. 64)

26. True reconciliation will never happen if Christians downplay truth.

After I addressed medical students at a secular campus on the subject of racial reconciliation, the meeting was opened for questions. One student introduced himself and stated that he was a Muslim. He explained that he believed in a different way to heaven than I had articulated during my presentation. In light of our different beliefs and my dogmatic rejection of his faith about how one is saved, he asked how could I ever speak about religious reconciliation?

I answered by asking him to imagine that a dying patient was lying between the two of us. According to his training, the patient's life could be saved only by his performing a very precise surgical procedure. I asked how he would respond if I came and said that I wanted to perform a surgery that was contrary to what medical science shows would save that patient's life.

"I am sure that, out of love for the patient and professional integrity, you would oppose my surgery, knowing that it probably would be fatal."

Yes, he said, He would certainly try to intervene.

“Just like you, I love people in whom I see a fatal disease of sin. I believe that Jesus Christ is the only treatment (see John 14:6). I could not seek religious peace at the price of letting him go into an eternal hell. Love for you and your eternal destiny compels me to tell you the truth.”

The problem with our attempts at reconciliation to date is that they try to reconcile people at the wrong points. Multiculturalism says that truth doesn't matter, or that there is no firm truth to be found. Compromise at that point may break down cardboard walls and make a society that looks more united. But true reconciliation – breaking down the stone and razor-wire walls of racism erected by sin – will never fall if Christians downplay truth. (p. 65)

27. The church dares not deny the importance that God places upon sound doctrine.

Indeed, sound doctrine of teaching should characterize any minister of the gospel. The Bible is our textbook for ministry (2 Tim. 3:16-17). Those who have the gift of speaking in the church are to speak as the oracles of God (1 Peter 4:10-11). One is to rightly divide, or seek clear understanding, of the intent of a given passage, the Word of truth (2 Tim. 2:15). Such New Testament books as 1 Corinthians, Galatians, Colossians, 2 Thessalonians, 1 Timothy, Titus, Hebrews, 1 John, and Jude were written, at least in part, to give doctrinal clarity to saints who were being swayed by error. The New Testament warns against false prophets and calls the church to refute erroneous teaching (see 2 Cor. 11:1-23; Gal. 2:27; 3:1; Phil. 3:1-2; 1 Tim. 4:1-3; 2 Tim. 3:1-9; 4:3; 2 Peter 2:1-3; Jude 3-4.) The church dares not, in the name of racial reconciliation or any other issue, deny the importance that God places upon sound doctrine (see Prov. 29:18; Hos. 4:6) (p. 66)

28. When man unites in rebellion against God, the consequences will be severe.

We as a society are becoming, in the name of tolerance, increasingly more intolerant of Bible-believing Christians. Diversity has been divested of any objective moral foundation. Love has been redefined as abhorring that which is good while cleaving to that which is evil. When man unites in rebellion against God, the consequences will be severe (see Gen. 10; 2 Thess. 2:1-12). (p. 75)

29. The Christian has a clear guide for racial reconciliation, and that is divine revelation—the bible.

The Christian, unlike the world, has a clear guide for racial reconciliation, and that is divine revelation—the Bible. What is the message of the Bible in regard to reconciliation? God in His sovereign wisdom has established a unity between believers

– regardless of racial or cultural background—as expressed in Ephesians 2:11-22. (p. 75)

30. Reconciliation for believers, commitment to clear teaching of Scripture, biblical morality, and divine love.

If God has created such a marvelous relationship for believers, why are Christian communities not showing the world how reconciliation is accomplished? What is our responsibility? The Scripture charges us to keep the unity (Eph. 4:3).

The central problem is that a significant part of the church is enmeshed in personal and corporate sin and in defection from strong doctrinal teaching. We assume that the goal is unreachable because we don't really take the Bible seriously as the marching orders for daily life. To nurture properly the unity that God has created, believers must be committed to clear teaching of Scripture, biblical morality, and divine love. Racial reconciliation in the church is a high calling, but it is a possible calling if the people of God act like what God has declared them to be the challenge is to show the compassion of Christ without compromising the truth of Christ. (p 76-77)

31. Prejudice prospers in the midst of a proud people.

Pride presents the great challenge that stands before those who would be God's tools to transform racism into radical love. Natural to the human heart is the aspiration for superiority. This attitude lends itself to grouping by nationality, regional distinction or color wherein people compete to show themselves superior through education, wealth, or morality. Pride also makes it difficult to confess or forgive sins of the past. Pride is more interested in casting blame than in construction solutions. Prejudice prospers in the midst of a proud people.

One of the faces of pride is fear. Fear of confrontation, contention, and the probability of failure turn the weak-hearted away from the path of love. The fear of doctrinal defection and race pollution through interracial marriage paralyzes many saints of all racial backgrounds. Others fear retaliation, loss of control, neglect of the disadvantaged, and closed doors to ministry opportunity. Insecurity and a lack of trust are endemic among the saints. Fear weakens faith; the greatness of God is obscured by the shadow of giants, in this case the giants of racial division. (p. 81-82)

32. Reconciliation comes at a high price.

Racism has flowed through the American culture like blood through the human body. Our healing will be neither fast nor painless. Reconciliation comes at a high price. Reconcilers are sometimes misunderstood and alienated by each group they are seeking to reconcile. Their loyalty to Christ is questioned, and saints separate from them. Doors of opportunity slam shut. Lonely is the road toward reconciliation. Few

there be who will trust Christ and press forward to cut a new path through the confusion of secular multiculturalism and sacred pride. (p.82)

33. National debate makes it difficult for Christians to sort out stands that are worth affirming.

The heat of this national debate makes it difficult for Christians to sort out stands that are worth affirming without being identified as buying all of the other positions that have been packaged with the worthwhile stand. (p. 83)

34. Racial reconciliation is a complex matter for the church due to the fact that the Bible has been misinterpreted and misapplied.

What makes racial reconciliation a complex matter for the church is the fact that the Bible has been misinterpreted and misapplied. This miseducation of the people of God led many people to believe that racism and many of its accompanying cruelties were sanctioned by God. Today, we see that, although many leaders of Christian organizations have rejected the racist teaching of past leaders, their institutions were established upon racist premises. To some people, it is sacrilegious to expose the errors of deceased founders and work to conform the institution to a biblical standard. This effort might affect curricula, history, and policies. It is much easier to defend the past, even if it is not exactly the truth.

Regardless of the complexity of the issue, we need a generation of leaders with integrity— leaders with clear consciences who honor God above all others; leaders who exalt truth above tradition; leaders who will study, teach, and live the Scriptures faithfully; leaders who will persevere through opposition and disappointment. (p. 84)

35. Racial reconciliation is achievable.

Racial reconciliation is achievable when believers make the commitment to learn from past and current mistakes how to build a better future. We can be more open about critical issues that divide us, with the goal of finding solutions rather than casting blame. We can keep going after the inevitable failures until our unity causes our community to believe that we are disciples of Christ because of our manifest love for one another.
(p. 86)

36. Misinterpretation leads to misapplication, which leads to misdirection.

The Bible has been misused and abused in exegetical attempts to legitimize inhumane and unjust treatment of human beings. Blacks and members of other races have been stolen, separated from family, beaten, enslaved, raped, and murdered under the banner of obedience to the Word of God. Writings by apologists for slavery provide classic

examples of how Scripture could be reinterpreted to advance a variety of motives—from a denial that black men had souls to an attempt to keep the white gene pool pure. These errors are not corrected by a denial that we possess an accurate copy of the Word of God.

Misinterpretation leads to misapplication, which leads to misdirection. Both blacks and whites have believed some misguided interpretations of Scripture, which led to a lack of respect for people not only by others but also among blacks themselves. Thus, a new generation is fighting for dignity and respect by throwing off the restraints imposed upon them by white European and European American scholars. This new generation is seeking truth free of the contamination of racist bias. (p. 89)

37. The real challenge is not to find people of color but rather to find whites in the Bible.

The Bible is an omniracial book, mediated by the Holy Spirit through a racially mixed pool of human writers. The real challenge is not to find people of color but rather to find whites in the Bible. Except for the ones Paul and his associates encountered in Macedonia, Achaia, and Rome, plus a few godly Greeks Jesus met and the centurion Cornelius, there are virtually none of significance. (p. 90)

38. White or black, man is seeking personal status and pride.

Some people still debate the precise racial characteristics of Jesus. Blacks argue that He was black. Whites argue that He was white, or at least not black. All that matters to Paul in Romans 5, however, is that Jesus was the divine human atoning sacrifice for sin. Why is color so important? Man is seeking personal status and pride, whereas Christ is seeking humility and obedience. The difficulty of race relations is that neither blacks nor whites are obeying Him. Jesus said, “Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?” (Luke 6:46).

The challenge for every believer is to “let God be true, but every man a liar” (Rom. 3:4). Yes, the Bible has been misinterpreted and misapplied with the result being a misdirected church. Prejudice among the people of God is one product of allowing culture to be imposed upon Scripture. Many people of color are still greatly offended by the injustices and oppression to which their fellow human beings have been subjected in the name of God. Today, many people of color are being motivated to look at the Bible differently. God is not a racist.

The God who has revealed Himself in the Bible is no respecter of persons. His truth is the standard by which humanity and history are judged. No culture is to be imposed upon the Bible. Therefore, all people must search the Bible diligently to discover the transcultural mind of God. The historical grammatical approach to scriptural interpretation is the only way to let God speak for Himself through His Word. Scripture

is the final authority. Misinterpretations and misapplications have to be judged and corrected by sound interpretation that affirms the authority and trustworthiness of the text. (p.92)

39. Not all people are logical.

Nor have the arguments been outgrown. I was a guest on a Christian radio talk show in Virginia. A white supremacist caller framed the question thus: “We know white people came from Adam. We do not know where black people come from. What does your guest have to say about that?” For some reason, the caller chose to speak to the host and not to me.

I responded, “The Bible is clear in Romans 5:12 that sin entered the world by one man and was passed to all his descendants. If only white people come from Adam, then only white people are sinners.”

Not all people are logical. Plenty of people still hold the caller’s viewpoint. I have in my library a booklet that teaches that Christ died only for the sin of Adam’s race, for the sin of only white people. This was the mindset, for example, out of which Joseph Smith developed his Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (LDS) in the 1820s. *The Book of Mormon* contains a rather elaborate story of the origin and destiny of the black man. The Mormon view of the struggle between good and evil in the Americas was literally a struggle between white skin and dark skin. True to the pattern of human-conceived religions, the LDS have conformed their views to the political realities. Their former bedrock stand against inclusion of blacks in their church has been relaxed somewhat in the pluralistic environment of the 1980s and 1990s through further “revelations” from God. Mormons now allow blacks to affiliate and to attain lower-level positions in the priesthood. However, they still deny that blacks can attain high ecclesiastical office.

This brand of convoluted logic can breed great hypocrisy in societies that otherwise seem relatively intelligent and civilized, societies identified with a Christian heritage. South Africa is one of these enlightened societies, settled by predominantly Reformed Calvinist Dutch, who subjugated their black neighbors and developed the intensely segregated system of apartheid. This hypocrisy is compounded by the Christian awakening that swept white and black southern Africa in the 1920s. Until apartheid laws fell in the 1980s, white Christian evangelicals institutionalized the worst sorts of racism against mostly evangelical Christian black.

Apartheid showed the utter absurdity inherent in such a system in its four-tiered classification system. Under whites in the hierarchical pecking order were Asian, then “colored” (white-black mixed blood), and then, at the bottom, “blacks.” However, because South Africa depended on the Asian rim economic markets controlled by Japan, South African society avoided assigning any social stigma to the Japanese. The rest of the world, especially Japan, would classify individuals of Japanese extraction as

Asian, but South Africans classified them as white to avoid offending any trading partners.

On the other side, the Black Muslim sects, of which a number exist, have their own creative concept of human origin. Allah created the original black man and woman whereas Mr. Yacub, their name for the devil, created the white man and woman. How naturally we react to a horrendous lie, not by moving toward the truth but by adapting the lie to suit our purposes. Who can deny that the Black Muslim's lie sounds every bit as likely as the concepts advanced by the white supremacists and by the Mormons? (p.93-95)

40. Twentieth-century scholarship makes assigning racial profiles to different people groups in the Bible fairly easy.

Twentieth-century scholarship makes assigning racial profiles to different people groups in the Bible fairly easy. Because Palestine was the crossroads for the ancient world, conquered or manipulated by one world empire after another, those racial profiles are varied to say the least. Until the coming of the Macedonian conquerors under Alexander the Great, that racial mix was almost entirely what would be described as non-Caucasian. Interestingly, the Hellenization program of the Greeks was the first attempt to make a claim of racially based cultural superiority, although Syrians and Egyptians carried out most persecution of Jews in the name of the "superior" Greek culture. The Jews promptly revolted under the Maccabees in 168 and eventually ran these racial oppressors out of the county.

In this mixed-race environment, many people who were not racial children of Abraham became proselytes to Judaism. Certainly, black were among the international group of three thousand converts to Christ at Pentecost. Not long after that, an unnamed treasurer of Ethiopia was led to the Lord (Acts 8:26-39). Paul's ministerial colleague, Simeon, was nicknamed "Niger" (lit., "black," see 13:1). To know whether this is the African-born Simon of Cyrene who carried the cross for Jesus is impossible. Evidence exists of a community of black African Jews in Antioch at the time the church began there. To speculate of what race New Testament Christians might have been is interesting. In the early centuries of the church, when North Africa was the center of some of the most intense persecution of believers, most church leaders were black. Athanasius (296-373), who stood almost alone for a time against the heresy of Arianism, was an Egyptian and called "the black dwarf" by his enemies. Athanasius may have had a deformed back. Augustine of Hippo (354-430), the most significant theologian of the early Christian centuries, was the child of a Greek pagan father and a Berber Christian mother. Until its ecclesiastical centers became established in Constantinople and Rome, Christianity was predominantly not "the white man's religion."

With such research coming to light, a growing number of black and white scholars can hold up to ridicule the skewed worldview of racist Christianity. The battle to turn the worldview right-side up is difficult nonetheless. The upside-down view is held by Christians who haven't heard any better and by some scholars and pastors who certainly should know better. (p.96-97)

41. God reveals that the concept of a racial curse is absurd.

The most influential purveyor of the curse of Ham in the twentieth century has been the extremely popular *Scofield Reference Bible*. The 1917 edition states that “a prophetic declaration is made that from Ham will descend an inferior and servile posterity.” This error was not corrected until the 1967 revision, and many Christians still accept only the 1917 Scofield notes. Even so beloved a preacher and Bible commentator as Arthur Pink maintained early in the twentieth century, “The curse uttered by Noah did not fall directly on Ham but embraced all the descendants of Ham” (Pink, 1981, 125).

Not until the 1960's, when advances in Bible scholarship coincided with the civil rights movement, did Christians seriously think about what they had believed regarding the sin of Ham and Noah's curse on him in Genesis 9:22-25. The traditional view did not stand up to scrutiny, and scholars realized that Moses doesn't tell us much about the incident, except perhaps as it related to the later struggle between Israel and the Canaanites. Such questions to be asked include the following.

1. What precisely did Ham do?
2. Why was the curse directed at only one of his sons, Canaan?
3. What was truly involved when a patriarch withheld his blessing from one of his children?
4. Did such a curse legitimately descend through all of a man's descendants?

What God does reveal about the answers to the preceding questions shows that the concept of a racial curse is absurd. Nations (the Canaanites, for example) did tend toward an antigodly society, and they were judged accordingly. Their curse was clearly the result of their own sins, which were passed down among the generations by societal example, not by a genetic curse.

Unfortunately, too many people have failed to ask the questions that might call into question their own social example. A Canaanite-type curse was attached to the history of the United States, which played out through slavery, Jim Crow, the Ku Klux Klan, the Aryan Nation, skinheads, and related aberrations. The curse remains on American society to the extent that it remains locked in its own godless examples. This is not the curse on a race but the curse on a sin. All of society—not just the blacks, the Mexican-Americans, the Japanese-Americans interned during World War II, or the Native

Americans who were dispossessed and exterminated-is damaged by this heritage.
(p.100-102)

42. It is time for Christians to show their true colors, which is love.

A friend of mine gave me a T-shirt with these words on the front: "It's not a black thing or a white thing." On the back it says, "It's a Jesus thing." How appropriate that our Christian identity be rooted in Christ! It is time for Christians to show their true colors. Color me love. As a saint, my true color is love. May a watching world see our color as clearly as it is communicated in the Bible. (p. 111)

43. Sin is sin, no matter who commits it.

We must be biblical in dealing with sin. Sin is sin, no matter who commits it. I can criticize anyone at Bob Jones, and I can criticize Jesse Jackson when I believe they are out of conformity with Scripture. I also reserve the right to praise statements from anyone that I believe is making a valid biblical point. We must express appropriate compassion (Acts 20:28, I Cor. 12:12-14, 18-23, 25-27; Eph. 4:11-16; I John 3:16-18; 4:7-12, 19, 5:3). At the same time, as a Christian I will hold those that I believe are Bible-teaching Christians and representatives of orthodox faith to a higher standard of behavior. This is one reason why I am more critical of an institution like Bob Jones University than I would be of a political leader or secular institution that does not pretend to share my faith. (p.123)

44. Lack of trust between blacks and white.

One man told me that if someone was trying to lynch him, he would just as soon have Jesse Jackson around as white members of his church. He figured that Jackson would make some noise; he was not so sure about what his white brothers would do. On the other hand, whites have shared with me their frustration and sense of betrayal when they had dared to identify with blacks and these blacks began to speak as though all whites are their enemy. (p. 124)

45. Service opportunities for black ministers should be as broad as the Bible allows.

Blacks who receive their ministry degrees from white-majority seminaries have an expectation that they will find a place to serve the Lord in missions or in other forms of church leadership. Too often, if a black person is saved and feels the call to a particular ministry, people in power automatically will view his call as being to black missions. We must ask simply what Jesus wants this person to do. Service opportunities should be as broad as the Bible allows. (p.124)

46. Watch one's communication. Seek to win individuals, not races.

Because racial reconciliation might be a new thing for some readers, let me add how important it is to watch one's communication. Avoid name calling. Avoid talking down to people. Remember that as Christians, we do need one another. Our nonverbal cues speak louder than our words. When a person of another color walks into your group, don't act as though he doesn't belong. Don't slide over to keep from being close. People recognize when they are not wanted.

Seek to win individuals, not races. We must reach the one person whom God has placed in our lives. Individuals differ. Perhaps God will use the person whom we win to win his or her entire group (John 4). (p. 125)

47. Christ is the peacemaker between men, nations, races, and classes.

The abolition of the middle wall of partition in the temple speaks precisely about the issue of social segregation. The wall separated the court of the Gentiles from the court of the Jews in the temple. Josephus, the historian, states that an inscription forbade a Gentile from going into the court of the Jews (Ant. 8.3.2). All such segregation was abolished by Christ. Furthermore, Christ created a unity and a peace that have social implications (Eph. 2:15). A.T. Robertson's *Word Pictures in the New Testament* makes this comment about Ephesians 2:15: "Christ is the peacemaker between men, nations, races, classes" (1934,527). Willful, racially segregated churches deny the social implications of the Cross. The Cross is the key reconciling event both between man and God and between believers. (p. 140)

48. The answer to America's problem is in God's house!

Perhaps if the church would pray as much as it debated and competed, the cause of Christ would be better served by a racially reconciled community of believers, a community that bears light in a darkened society.

American society is plagued with numerous problems, of which racism is one. Equal access means that each believer has the responsibility to believe God to work in his or her situation. It is time to stop waiting on the government, the society, and the man!

The answer to America's problems is not in the White House, the courthouse, or the schoolhouse. These institutions need guidance from the God of righteousness. The answer to America's problem is in God's house! The church must offer a biblical alternative to the moral relativism of the culture. We must demonstrate that we are Christians by our love one for another. For this, each of us is equally responsible to ask the Father that we may receive. (p. 142)

49. Christ is building a church that comprises every ethnic people group.

“Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Col. 1:27) is a wonderful truth. This truth, which encourages personal significance, has racial reconciliation implications.

God indwells not only me but also all other believers! In Ephesians 2:20-22, Paul uses the analogy of a holy temple being built for God to live in. Each believer is a part of this building. First Corinthians 3:16 and I Peter 2:5 use the same concept. Together the church is being formed into a holy temple where almighty God dwells.

Every Christian should desire to be in the presence of God. Because God indwells all believers, believers should desire to be with other believers. When we are with believers, we are in the presence of God. Yes, together we are the dwelling place of God. This is a profound analogy of the brotherhood of believers.

God has so constituted the church that we need each other to provide the structure in which He has chosen to live. The church is a living organism. Its life comes from the God who indwells it. Our growth is dependent upon our togetherness. Each one contributes to the building, but no one is independent (Eph. 4:15-16). A divinely instituted interdependency exists among the people of God.

Racial reconciliation reflects the fact that God dwells in a diverse community. The presence of God is to be found in all people who have trusted Christ for salvation. May a reconciled church, with its splendid array of a rainbow of people of color, allow the brightness of His presence to capture the attention of our society. The temple in which God dwells transcends race.

Christ is building a church that comprises every ethnic people group. The concept of a diverse church was the brainchild of God. The New Testament church—according to revelation and constitution—is a reconciled body. Jews and Gentiles have been made one in Christ. In Christ, all believers have equal access to the Father, are fellow citizens of heaven, are family members, and are dwelling place of God.

These analogies speak powerfully for racial reconciliation. Yet, one may ask if these are merely isolated Scriptures. Was diversity in the church a major or a minor theme? Several Scriptures illustrate that cultural/ethnic diversity was a major New Testament theme. However, one must note that the issues then were not color coded as they have been in America. (p. 146-147)